



## State Representative Dan Roach

# To the 31<sup>st</sup> District: 2002 Government Report

Serving citizens in south King County and northeast Pierce County, including Auburn, Bonney Lake, Buckley, Carbonado, Enumclaw, Greenwater, Kent, Lake Tapps, and Wilkeson

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Dear Friends,

As you know, I am a very positive person and consider myself to be an optimist. However, even the greatest optimist must face reality now and then. Facts are facts and sometimes no amount of butter can make them taste good. This newsletter addresses these facts and contains my opinions based on my observations and participation in Olympia as your state representative.

As I think back on the 2002 legislative session, many topics come to mind: the budget gamble, transportation, and opportunities lost. Much of what went on in Olympia the first three months of 2002 did little to regain the trust of the citizens of Washington.

In my January newsletter, I had predicted this would be an interesting session. Due to November's special election, Democrats controlled the House of Representatives (by two votes), the Senate (by one vote) and the governor's office. However, I noted **this majority would still require a great deal of bipartisanship to truly serve Washington's citizens.**

Unfortunately, this didn't happen. Instead, we missed the opportunity to show the citizens we were serious about changing the way government does business. It was especially disheartening due to the amount of letters, phone calls and e-mail I received this year from the people in the 31<sup>st</sup> District.

**I am a big proponent of using common sense**, especially when it comes to creating good policy in Olympia. You can imagine how disappointed I was, then, to witness a majority of legislators throw common sense aside and vote simply to appease certain special interest groups. Legislating by fear is not the way to create good policy!

The changes made to the 2001-03 budget reflect that fear. While in the state's worst fiscal crisis in over 20 years, **our government still avoided making any meaningful cuts to bureaucracy.** This is inexcusable! Instead, they mortgaged our tobacco settlement money to provide a one-time fix. The question still remains, what will we do next year when we are faced with the same predicament of being over \$1 billion in the hole.

To end on a positive note, I am very pleased with the participation of several of our youth who are participating in the 31<sup>st</sup> district **Student Methamphetamine Advisory Board**. These students are volunteering their time and efforts to combat the terrible effects this drug has on our community. Please read more on this issue inside.

To the many of you who contacted me during the session, thank you for your comments. I am proud to represent the families of the 31<sup>st</sup> District and encourage more of you to also let me know how state government affects your life. **Your comments allow me to better represent you in Olympia.**

Thank you,

Dan Roach

Your State Representative

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## Budget: *Headed Down Wrong Path*

We saw the signs of a slowing economy, but some lawmakers made the choice to patch instead of fix. I had concerns that the budget was unsustainable and left no room for error. I was looking for ways to change the way government does business.

The state operating budget adopted by the Legislature last June was fiscally unsound. I did not support that budget because it spent \$700 million more than revenue coming in.

### *Let's look at some history:*

- The national recession began in March 2001, with Washington's economic slowdown starting in February 2001.
- The state's revenue forecast was lowered in both March and June 2001. The forecast reports pointed to the weakness in the state's economy.
- The Revenue Forecast Council took the forecast down \$101 million in September, before we knew the impacts of Sept. 11.

This year, we were forced back to the drawing board to try and bring the budget back into balance – just six months into the two-year fiscal cycle. **Budget writers drafted a new plan that actually makes it worse** – doubling the deficit spending to \$1.4 billion more than anticipated revenue.

### *Long-term debt irresponsible*

The budget uses accounting tricks to cover this deficit. The first scheme to sell off future tobacco settlement payments to pay for one-time expenses has long-term consequences for the citizens of Washington. The budget relies on a plan called 'securitization' to sell off part of the state's tobacco settlement payments to raise \$450 million in cash to pay for ongoing operating budget expenditures. Giving up 30 years of revenue for a one-time, one-year fix is simply not good public policy.

I supported amendments to this controversial plan to make better use of the settlement money. They included using the tobacco payments to pay for senior prescription

***"I cannot support a budget that cuts funding to save drug addicted babies, while at the same time continues to fund FREE higher education to our convicts behind bars. WHERE ARE OUR PRIORITIES?"***

drugs, backfill public health agencies, restore cuts in nursing home reimbursements or increase salaries for nursing home workers. All were turned down.

## ***Gutting Initiative 601***

During the 2002 legislative session, lawmakers approved a rule change that placed the final nail in the coffin of Initiative 601, the voter-mandated spending limit. **I did not support this change.** Now, lawmakers can tap the state's dwindling emergency reserves and increase taxes with only a simple-majority vote, rather than the two-thirds majority mandated by the passage of I-601 in 1993.

## **Winners and Losers**

The budget protects bureaucracy, while **cutting spending for education, health care, public safety, and services for the truly needy.** There is no serious effort to reduce the size of government. Faced with a \$1.5 billion hole, some lawmakers could not bring themselves to stop the growth in spending.

**What are others saying** about the plan to sell off a portion of the state's settlement with tobacco companies – ***money once earmarked to pay for health care services and anti-smoking efforts*** – for a one-time cash payment to fund state spending increases.

***"too big a gamble for the state"***

– News Tribune editorial (3/6/02)

***"no real solution"***

– Seattle Times editorial (3/6/02)

***"we'll pay a high price for this gimmick"***

– South County Journal editorial (3/14/02)

***"a bad deal for Washington taxpayers"***

– Attorney General Christine Gregoire

***"terrible fiscal policy"***

– State Treasurer Mike Murphy

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## Transportation: *Statewide Gas Tax Vote in November*

The statewide package, House Bill 2969, does not do enough to regain the trust of the people of Washington. It does not guarantee the Department of Transportation will change the way it does business. If we are truly to serve the taxpayers, we must require **EFFICIENCY**, not simply add another layer of government. For these reasons, I voted against the statewide package. Yes, we need to improve our transportation infrastructure, but regaining the trust and respect of Washington's citizens remains my top priority.

Voters will be given a chance in November to vote on a nearly \$8 billion statewide transportation package. I encourage you to become educated and make the best decision for you and your family. The statewide project list is available, but lawmakers from both parties admit this represents only a 'wish list' of the current Legislature. Future legislative action could rearrange, add or remove projects.

### *The statewide package includes:*

- A 9-cent-a-gallon gas tax increase – 5 cents the first year and 4 cents one year after that.
- A 1 percent increase in the sales tax on new and used vehicles.
- A 30 percent increase (15 percent per year over two years) on gross truck weight fees.

## Regional Plan: *Tri-County Link Dangerous*

The Legislature also approved a regional transportation plan that links King, Snohomish and Pierce counties into one taxing district. **This is a dangerous proposition for rural residents.** Under the regional plan, rural residents are outnumbered – pure and simple. I supported an amendment to make sure voters in any one county had to approve the tax before they were forced to pay it, **but this common-sense compromise was defeated.**

## Public Safety Funding

This summer, I will be joining a local Drug Enforcement Agency meth raid, hoping to gain an understanding of what our law enforcement and fire personnel, plus the neighbors of these drug pushers face far too often. Hopefully I can relay these experiences back to the lawmakers who voted to decrease funding for public safety in Washington.

Today, more than ever, we should be responding to the taxpayers who have told lawmakers over and over to protect public safety. Unfortunately, one of the casualties of irresponsible budget decisions was the loss of I-695 backfill funding those local counties and cities have used to maintain their police, fire and health services.

We all must work together to protect the citizens of Washington. I take this job very seriously and hope I can convince my colleagues in Olympia to do the same.

## Meth: *Helping Each Other Overcome*



(L-R): Joe Anderson (LA to Rep. Roach), Amanda Cantrell, Alexandra Personius, Megan See, Angelina McCarr, Rep. Dan Roach, Patty McDonald, Chris Hewitt, Don Hewitt, Cassie Haugen, and Gloria McCarr

I was honored to welcome a group of students from the 31<sup>st</sup> District to Olympia this session. They comprise the Student Methamphetamine Advisory Board, an organization I started in conjunction with schools in the area. The students and their parents, pictured above, shared with me their thoughts and opinions how we can stop the scourge of meth from continuing to spread through our community. I hope to gather more information from the students and propose legislation in 2003 that comes from teens and will help keep teens from using meth. To receive more information or to join the group, call my office at (360) 786-7846.

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## Higher Education

In the 31<sup>st</sup> District, we have access to many opportunities to further our education and provide a better future for our children. However, these higher education alternatives could now be out of reach for many middle-class students and families. To balance the budget, lawmakers reduced funding to higher education by \$57 million and authorized colleges and universities to raise tuition rates to offset the loss. The University of Washington and Washington State University tuition could increase up to 16 percent, community and technical college tuition could increase up to 12 percent and all other universities could increase their tuition up to 14 percent.

## Contact Me

While our work in Olympia continues to be my top priority, the time I truly enjoy is the time I spend traveling throughout the 31st District speaking in classrooms and to community groups. It was from these meetings that the students and I formed the Student Meth Task Force. If you would like me to attend your meeting, classroom or other community gathering to speak about the 2002 Legislature, transportation, budget issues, or just about how our work in Olympia affects your life, please call or e-mail my office.



Dan

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Department of Printing